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THE COALITION.

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THE
COALITION;

OR, AN

ESSAY

ON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF

PARTIES.

SERPENTES AVIBUS GEMINANTUR, TIGRIBUS AGNI.

HOR.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR R. FAULDER, NEW BOND-STREET.

MDCCLXXXIII.

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THE
COALITION.

TO forget the personal resentments,
to obliterate the private disputes,
which may endanger the safety of the
commonwealth, has been justly ranked
amongst the highest exertions of patriotic
virtue. The sacrifice of passions
B ignoble

ignoble in their origin, and contracted in their views, to those of an higher, and more expanded nature, is perhaps the definition, as it seems to constitute the essence, of true magnanimity. Nor have instances been wanting in which the happiness of a nation has been due to an union of parties, till then influenced by mutual jealousy, and exercised in unremitting warfare.—Yet, to the misfortune of mankind, it may be remarked, that *such* exertions of beneficence may be considered in the same light with those productions of nature, which not only command admiration by their splendor, but derive estimation from their scarcity.

A coalition of parties, designed for national purposes, and directed to national objects,

objects, has seldom been effected under other circumstances, or produced by other occasions, than the pressure of extreme calamity, and the exigency of universal distress. But an union of adverse factions, formed on very different principles, and actuated by very different motives, is by no means a rare event in the annals of political history. Such combinations have more frequently resembled the confederacy of robbers, than the association of patriots; and have rather involved the oppression than effected the preservation of the country.

The establishment of some criterion, by which we may distinguish the views, and ascertain the motives, of every coalition, seems peculiarly necessary at the present crisis, when the sudden reconcilia-

tion and union of two parties long opposed by adverse principles, long embittered by mutual injuries, has presented a new phenomenon to the political world. And since the confederacy, thus strangely formed, has been the source of a material change in the administration of this kingdom, it may be proper to analyse its component parts, and to inquire whether it is justified by principles of public spirit, and political consistency ; and whether it is attended by a prospect of benefit, or of detriment to the real interests of the people.

The sincerity of such a coalition, and its tendency to the public advantage, may, I apprehend, be determined by the following considerations. If amongst the parties there are many who, uncompelled

pelled by immediate necessity, have consented to share that power they might themselves have engrossed, it may at least be hoped of them, that, in the participation of interests and of counsels, they are actuated by a laudable wish to strengthen the administration of government. Should it also be observed, that the differences which created, and the feuds which embittered, their former separation, were merely personal, or solely relative to a few particular measures, and those, perhaps, of a speculative nature, we may discover yet further cause to indulge a candid and liberal expectation. If, in addition to these circumstances, we perceive, that such a coalition cannot, in its probable consequences, ensure to the parties the immediate enjoyment of power or profit, though it

may

may procure essential advantage to their country, we may then consider its motives, nay, we may almost venture to conclude them to be honest and sincere. On the contrary, should it appear to be the only possible means of gratifying the views of interest and ambition—should it be observed, that their former hostility arose from a disagreement in the most essential principles, from a direct and constant opposition in measures, and from the most perfect repugnancy between their general system of policy—should their present union appear to be formed at the critical moment, when alone it could secure the acquisition of ministerial importance, though till then rejected with mutual indignation—we may surely be permitted to doubt, whether such a confederacy derived its origin
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from just and honourable motives ; we may hesitate, at least, in conferring the exclusive praise, which belongs to the exertions of disinterested virtue.

Of the parties that compose the present coalition, the first that presents itself to our view, is that which adheres to the standard of a noble lord, who for several years held the first department in administration, and under whose government (whether by misconduct or misfortune) our present calamities had their origin, and almost their completion. Let us examine whether the noble lord, or his adherents, can or ought to unite with their late inveterate adversaries.

We will, in candour, suppose lord North, if not actually right in all his principles

principles and measures, to have acted at least on a firm persuasion of their justice and expediency. The party whose opposition to every part of his system was conducted with such uncommon vehemence, and pursued with such incessant acrimony, he regarded (or at least he represented) as the factious enemies of public tranquillity ; as the audacious patrons of rebellion ; as the efficient cause of the dismemberment of the British empire. By what sudden conversion are Licentiousness and Faction become the chosen handmaids to Peace and Order ? By what wonderful coincidence of events are those who were lately the most prone to disturb, held forth as the fittest to direct, the operations of government ? By what magic incantation are seditious demagogues

gogues metamorphosed into real patriots? The plastic power that created these fantastic forms, can only be determined by their deeds, the usual criterion that refers a supernatural appearance to divine direction, or infernal combination.

The character of the noble lord will perhaps furnish a key to this almost incomprehensible mystery. I mean not to discuss the supposed merit, or the imputed iniquity of his former public conduct; his more private and personal qualities may account for his present versatility. The habitual indolence, the characteristic phlegm of his temper, renders it inaccessible to more than a temporary impression of benefits, or of injuries. The assiduity of service, may

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indeed excite a transient kindness ; the acrimony of opposition may awaken a momentary resentment ; but the prospect of essential interest seems to be the only tie that can secure his fixed and permanent attention. The maxim of Swift, That men are grateful in proportion as they are revengeful, appears whimsically reversed in his lordship's disposition. To the most respectable of his friends, he is said to be cold and ungracious ; to the bitterest of his adversaries, placable and attentive : and less rewards have been conferred on the services of disinterested attachment, than have been yielded to the threats of unprovoked hostility.

The other party, that remains to be examined, is that which was for many years under the banners of a deceased
marquis,

marquis, and is now *nominally* headed by a noble duke, but *really* by the once redoubted enemy of the old administration. Amongst the various descriptions of men in opposition to that system, this party had been distinguished, not only by its number and importance, but by its ardour, its perseverance, and its consistency. Nor were its councils directed, or its efforts employed in the obstruction of some detached measures, or in opposition to a few particular branches of the ruling system: they were repugnant to every essential principle; they were abhorrent to the whole plan of policy which ministers had thought proper to adopt. It was *their* political creed, that the noble lord and his associates had made corruption the ground and basis of their government; that they

had pursued it with an indecency, which the most profligate of former times would have blushed to behold ; and carried it to an height that menaced destruction to public liberty. The American war, they maintained, odious as it was in its principles, and ruinous in its effects, formed a part only of the extensive plan of arbitrary power, and was but a minute rill from the pernicious fountain of corruption. An iniquitous and shameless traffic of jobs, a wanton profusion of the public treasure, a determined hostility to every scheme of improvement or reformation, were urged as proofs that the continuance of such men in office would be pernicious to the interests, and fatal to the constitution, of Britain. Nor can these declarations of the Rockingham party be
merely

merely considered as effusions of interested zeal, as the fallies of temporary resentment; they appeared to flow from the most settled principles, and to result from the deepest conviction.

The question therefore returns, and returns with redoubled force to them, Whether they *ought* to unite with lord North in forming an administration, and to restore the influence of such a minister to any share in the operations of government? Would they have us impute their inveterate opposition of so many years to sedition? Their most solemn declarations to malevolence and calumny? Or must we suppose either their new friends, or themselves, so weak, so infatuated, so childish, in understanding, as to persevere half their
lives

lives in an error, which the consideration of a single moment could have pointed out? No pretence of this kind has indeed been held forth; nor have either party, as yet, had the courage directly to avow a desertion of their former principles and professions. But may it not be asked, Whether such a desertion is not become, to one or other of the associating parties, indispensably necessary? Or whether they can, by any other method, cordially agree, and jointly conduct an uniform or a permanent system?

The subject matter of the principal dispute, is now, we are told, at an end, by the recognition of American independence; and, it is said, a great leader of one party has even ventured to declare;
that no difference in political sentiment subsists
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at present between them : yet, may we not be permitted to ask, what is become of the controversy concerning the influence of the crown, and the corrupt application of that influence by the old administration ? In what manner have they contrived to adjust their differences on the subject of national expenditure, and the profusion which, under the same ministers, was supposed to pervade every department of the state ? By what means have their discordant sentiments, on the subjects of representation, and the duration of parliaments, been so easily, and so conveniently reconciled ? When these, and a variety of other topics, shall again be discussed in parliament, will it not be rather a ludicrous sight, to observe the several members of the coalition drawing different ways, and pursuing contrary

trary interests? Will it be easy for them, in the conflict between opinions the most incongruous, and principles the most adverse to each other, to avoid a recurrence to that personal asperity they have habitually indulged; and a return to those sentiments of mutual animosity, which injuries so atrocious, which insults so galling, had implanted in their breasts? Let them not, therefore, too proudly boast; let them not too confidently foretell, the happy consequences of an union, which, to the mind of every impartial observer, neither promises the harmony of friendship, nor the vigour of stability.

We may be told, perhaps, that so various are the sentiments, so fluctuating the views of mankind, on subjects of a political

litical nature, that should we affix censure to every coalition, the component parties of which had, by a contrariety of opinion, or a diversity of system, been formerly engaged in public hostility, it would be impossible ever to form a junction, though the necessities of the state, or the voice of the people, should loudly demand it. That an union of such kind may, in certain instances, be founded in honourable motives; that it may be directed to the ends of public advantage, has been admitted, nay expressly inculcated, by the foregoing observations. The rancour of personal resentment may indeed be softened, the ardour of public contention extinguished, when some casual opposition of interest, some partial contrariety of opinion has given it birth. Trivial

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injuries may be pardoned ; venial errors atoned for ; nay even a favourite prejudice may sometimes be sacrificed at the shrine of general and real utility—but the advocates of the present union must take a wider field ; they must assert that, in the breast of a politician, no resentment, however noble, no objects, however beneficial, ought invariably to be cherished with affection, or preserved with fidelity : they must maintain that junction to be honourable by which each of the contracting parties must renounce their most sacred opinions, or belie their most solemn professions : they must prove it to be the same to lay aside a particular sentiment, or measure, from the conviction of experience, and totally to reverse our principles from the impulse of convenience or ambition.

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If, therefore, in the political as in the moral conduct of mankind, consistency appears the best, the most unequivocal proof of sincerity ; if every slight deviation from the path of rectitude ought to be viewed with the eye of inquisition, and watched with the jealousy of distrust ; with what sentiments can we observe a transaction, in which circumstances the most unnatural, and motives the most suspicious, so strikingly combine ? But when the nature of such a confederacy is ascertained ; when it appears manifestly to have its source in the rapacity of avarice and ambition, when its objects are avowed without shame, and its measures pursued without compunction, will the indignation of our country sleep ? will not its vengeance pursue those men who, by un-

natural associations and profligate cabals, have justly forfeited the confidence of the people, and who, unloved by their sovereign, and unsupported by the general sense of the nation, would, by the prevalence of faction alone, seize the power, and share the emoluments of government ?

It has been said that the example of the year 1757 pointed out the necessity, as well as justified the measure, of forming the present confederacy. But will the fortunate arrangements of that period bear the least analogy to the transactions of this day ? can the administration formed at that juncture, be so properly termed a coalition of parties, as a submission of all parties to the superior ability and commanding virtue of Mr. Pitt ?

Pitt ? called to the direction of her councils by the genuine wishes, the united voice of his country, that illustrious statesman neither sought the attainment of power by a combination with men whose principles he had severely reprobated, whose measures he had uniformly opposed : nor, when he had attained it, did he suffer such men to have any efficient share in his upright and consistent administration. Have the advocates of faction so little decency, are they so warmly solicitous of their own degradation, as to throw their conduct into a deeper shade by such an unfortunate, such an humiliating comparison ? comparisons, indeed, might have been more prudently avoided, on the present occasion ; lest they should remind us of some occurrences in history more nearly applicable

plicable to the views and motives of this new confederacy : lest some of their distinguished leaders should recall to our memory the Roman triumvirs, not indeed yielding up their friends, but mutually relinquishing their principles as the basis, and cement of this *virtuous* combination !

And here we may venture to delineate, in imagination, the expectations that united, and the transformations that attended these contrasted candidates for ministerial importance. Impelled by ambition, retarded however by jealousy, we may behold them in midnight converse. Fixed on their own aggrandizement, and careless of former professions, the lines of discrimination are defaced. The assertor of regal influence
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is heard no more,—the austere, the meagre traits of reformation and œconomy are softened,—the voice of the people is silent,—with extorted condescension, or with feigned reluctance, the scroll of proscription is prepared. The general supremacy of parliament, the retrenchment of national expenditure, the system of equal representation, are mutually relinquished——“*Damn'd with a spot alike!*” But they dare not assume the honest spirit of declared hostility. The once darling favourites of their hearts assert their claim to the mock protection of affected zeal. An insidious support is yielded by fear to popular expectation,—a real dereliction is decreed. The sacrifice of infamy, like an offering to Dis and Erebus, is perpetrated in secrecy, and in silence. Nature, however, took
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the alarm—The Westminster electors were astonished!—the quintuple alliance was confounded!

“ Visæque canes ululare per urbem.”

Thus much with respect to the merits and motives of the two parties that form the present coalition. It may not be improper to add some further remarks on the *virtue* their respective leaders have shewn, on the *credit* they have individually acquired, by this blessed alliance. The meek endurance of insults, the charitable oblivion of injuries, were, indeed, at all times striking features in the noble premier of the old administration. It was, however, conceived there might be insults too ignominious, there might exist injuries too rancorous

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ous and cruel for the exercise of even his uncommon gentleness and forbearance. But his lordship has improved upon the scriptural doctrine of charity : he not only forgives his enemies, but prefers them to his old connections and principles, and, with the amiable grace of humility, kisses the very rod he had so frequently, and so severely felt. Neither is his *gratitude* to a master, who so long had cherished, so amply had rewarded his services, the least conspicuous part of his lordship's character. By a voluntary union with that party who are generally deemed the most obnoxious, and perhaps have shewn themselves the least respectful, to their sovereign, he has demonstrated how far the sense of past kindness has influence in his breast : by descending from the highest rank to a subordinate station in

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party, by becoming a ladder to the ambition of his enemies, by stipulating for lucrative emoluments rather than effective power, he has enabled us to discern the true motive of his perseverance in an unpopular administration, and his accession to a still more unpopular confederacy.

Of his new ally, though once distinguished enemy, it is difficult to speak in a manner that has not occurred to every unprejudiced mind—in language that has not been anticipated by almost every news-paper. Not to dwell, therefore, on the palpable contradiction between his former invariable hostility, and his present *convenient* friendship; not to press him to the choice of being branded as a calumniator of innocence,

or

or detected as an associate of guilt ; not to remind him of that event on the completion of which he solemnly devoted himself to contempt and infamy ; I would merely desire to know, whether a coalition, between parties of adverse principles and measures, has always been so favourite an object of his heart. We have heard that not a twelvemonth ago, a similar suggestion was received with indignation, and spurned with contempt ; we have been informed that, even at a subsequent period, it was vehemently urged against Lord Shelburne that he had adopted the principles, and would probably restore the persons, of the old administration. From declarations like these, it should seem, there are cases in which an union with such men may be stigmatized as infamous ; from the present

sent transactions it appears there *are* also cases in which it may be celebrated as just and meritorious. Will the advocates of this gentleman furnish us with a criterion which may ascertain the distinction? Or will they suffer us to conclude such an union to be laudable in those cases alone, where it is necessary to the acquisition of emoluments and power?

One apology, indeed, has been alleged, which appears somewhat of an extraordinary nature; it is said, that the contentions of these party leaders had their origin in political, not in personal difference; and that it was not the *man*, but the *minister*, whom Mr. Fox so incessantly, and so indecently attacked. This circumstance, perhaps, might afford

ford a motive for *private* reconciliation and amity, but is surely one of the strongest arguments against an union of public measures and interests. Yet, unfortunately, even this does not appear to be quite accurate in point of fact; by adverting to the debates, it should seem, that the original source, at least, of their long and bitter animosity, was a disagreement in some private transaction. Mr. Fox is there represented to have been called to order, for expressions that charged the noble lord with the lowest and the blackest treachery.

That inconsistency so obvious, that motives so notorious, should have alienated many respectable friends, seems less a matter of surprize, than that a few such persons should still be retained
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by the specious pretences of eloquence, or the devices of *hereditary* subtlety; but our astonishment will somewhat abate, when we consider the peculiar qualities and character of the distinguished gentleman to whom I allude—" *Habet quidem multa vitia, habet etiam multa simulacra virtutum:*" his affected indifference to pecuniary matters, his habitual contempt of prudential maxims in private life, has, in the minds of superficial observers, preserved his public conduct from the imputation of interested meanness, or selfish rapacity—in him, roughness of manners has worn the semblance of sincerity and candour; the vehemence of passion has been mistaken for the confidence of truth; and the presumption of factious zeal, for the spirit of manly virtue.

It

It may be proper to add a few words respecting the purpose which avowedly actuated, and the consequences likely to attend this wonderful confederacy. Its confessed object was, the destruction of the earl of Shelburne's authority, and the establishment of a new and (as they pretend) a more popular administration. Though a full justification of that minister appears needless to the completion, and was remote from the intention, of these cursory remarks, yet, justice compels us to observe, that, in the general sense of mankind, neither his principles or public measures have yet been proved to deserve such severity of censure, or acrimony of opposition; nor had his administration hitherto appeared so fertile in pernicious counsels, so pregnant in dangerous effects, as to require

quire the junction of unnatural leagues, and the formation of factious cabals to dissolve it. The system of national œconomy, commenced during the Rockingham administration, had been preserved, nay, improved by lord Shelburne, with assiduity and zeal ; the reduction of ministerial influence was his firm and disinterested object ; nor even in its contracted state would he apply it to his own preservation and support : having sincerely approved, he warmly promoted the popular, though, perhaps, visionary schemes of constitutional improvement, and parliamentary reform. One event, indeed, and one alone, could furnish his adversaries with a ground of direct and serious attack ; I mean the peace which he had lately effected with the various enemies of this country.

country. A full discussion of this nice, this important controversy, is neither within the limits of our design, nor, perhaps, the extent of our information. But since it is admitted on all hands, that even the present peace, was to be preferred to a continuance of the war, it may at least be presumed, that ministers, for their own sakes, would stipulate as honourably and beneficially for their country, as its situation, and the temper of its enemies, would permit; to warrant our censure of such a transaction, the contrary of this ought to appear beyond all possibility of question or dispute; and we may surely be allowed to doubt, whether a measure which appeared in general agreeable to the wishes, and consonant to the expectations of the people, which independent corporate

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bodies had commended, and respectable trading cities approved, has received a candid, a dispassionate, and a mature consideration, from all those who in parliament were so eager to condemn it. Yet, whatever errors might have been observed, whatever mischiefs apprehended from the measure in question, nothing pernicious was imputed to its design, nothing criminal to its motive; nothing, therefore, that could justify a preposterous union between the boasted supporters, and the once reputed enemies of constitutional liberty.

The probable consequences of such an union, it requires no extraordinary wisdom, no uncommon foresight, to predict. If the Rockingham party, regardless of the opposite views and interests of their new associates,

ciates, should seriously and sincerely pursue a popular system of government, by what tie will they secure the concurrence of such associates, unless by the all-powerful motive of interest? Yet, will the reduced state of ministerial patronage—will the exhausted finances of the nation, admit such a distribution of emoluments, as shall at once reward the fidelity of their old friends, and feed the rapacity of their new connections? Neither, should they attempt the task, will they find it an easy matter to govern by rectitude of measures alone; having once adopted the supporters of a different principle, and discarded those friends with whom they had formerly united in a pure and uncorrupt administration. What, therefore, are the nation to expect from a ministry thus

F 3 composed?

composed? or what skill (to use the expression of a great writer) can “ amalgamate bodies of such heterogeneous qualities?” Can we indulge a rational hope, that public spirit in our rulers, that harmony in our system of government, will in any degree restore the credit and prosperity of Britain? Do we not rather anticipate the period, when the fiend of discord shall again rear its head with redoubled horror? when the weakness of distracted councils, the fury of contending factions, shall again expose us to the derision of surrounding nations, and the contempt of mankind? when the few upright and independent spirits that remain, sick with the disputes, shamed with the profligacy of party, shall recede from public life, and
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abandon in despair the interests of their country.

Yet, the period of despair may still be far removed, if those whom prejudice alone seduces from the cause of virtue, whose conduct the attachment of party, not the meanness of self-interest, controls, would dispassionately examine the candidates for power, and, uniting only with the purest characters, direct their attention to the purest and noblest pursuits. Nor are such characters wanting, in whom splendid abilities combine with manly and consistent integrity; who pursue the track of honour, not through the subtle mazes of party cabal, but in the direct road of sincerity and virtue; such, it has been generally allowed, was the venerable earl of Chatham;

ham; such may we promise to ourselves in the ripening talents and virtues of his son: the natural endowments of eloquence, the almost intuitive acquisition of science, the comprehensive scope of understanding, miraculous as they appear at such a period of life, are but ornaments that more fully display the amiable rectitude of his principles, and genuine purity of his heart: in him the blaze of hereditary genius, the glow of conscious sincerity, diffuse a milder and more temperate light, corrected by the social qualities of his disposition, and softened by the gentleness of his nature; on him alone may Independence and Integrity turn their eyes, wearied by the intrigues, nauseated by the pretences of interest and of faction.

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To collect into one point of view the sentiments of all impartial men, upon the present extraordinary coalition, is the humble, but honest purpose of these remarks. Hypocrisy may at first deceive—fair professions may for a time delude, the prejudice of party zeal, and the blind credulity of friendship: but the artifices of subtlety may yet be detected—the effrontery of profligacy may yet be abashed—the voice of reason, and of justice, may yet prevail.

F I N I S.





